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ABSTRACT

Early Head Start (EHS) is a comprehensive, two-generation program that includes intensive services that begin before the child is born and concentrate on enhancing the child's development and supporting the family during the critical first 3 years of a child's life. This paper discusses approaches to measuring father involvement in their children's lives and examines specific measurement methods used in the Father Studies of the Early Head Start Evaluation Project. In addition, the paper highlights lessons from the field that have emerged as father involvement is measured in the ongoing EHS project. Father involvement is described as a multidimensional, continually evolving concept. Time use measures of father involvement are described, and various models of involvement are presented. The paper notes limitations of existing instruments, including the questionable validity of self-report, the often interchangeable use of generic fathering versus child-specific fathers, and the limited generalization of findings from middle-class, European American groups to other groups. The paper describes the EHS program, summarizing the 17 EHS program sites participating in the national evaluation and local research and representing a diversity of locations, populations, culture, ethnicity, and urban-rural settings. Four strands of father studies planned are detailed: (1) interviews with fathers of 24- and 36-month-olds; (2) study of mothers and fathers of newborns; (3) study of strategies used by programs to engage fathers and father figures; and (4) local research studies focused on fatherhood issues significant to local populations. Measurement instruments are then detailed, including questionnaires and videotaped father-child interactions that will yield both qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, the paper explores some of the challenges in assessing father involvement among low-income men, including developing coding systems, obtaining reliability in coding father-child interactions, operationalizing specific constructs, retaining participants, and studying social fathers. The paper

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concludes by pointing out advances that have been made in the measurement of father involvement. (Contains 23 references.) (KB)

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Measuring Father Involvement In The Early Head Start Evaluation: A Multidimensional Conceptualization

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Introduction

Interest in fathers and their role in their children's development have sustained researchers attention off and on for much of the past three decades. Sociodemographic, cultural, economic, and historical changes--including-women's increasing labor force participation, the rise in nonparental care for children, increases in non-marital childbearing, cohabitation, the absence of many men from their families, and the increased involvement of other fathers in their children' s lives--have greatly affected how families organize themselves (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, in press). These changes have led to different family structures and different expectations and beliefs about the roles of fathers and mothers. We have seen an evolution of father ideals from the colonial father, to the distant breadwinner, to the modern involved dad, to the father as co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Although acknowledgment of paternity and economic provision have always been fundamental assumptions of fathering, there exists a new ideal of "co-parent" in which the gender division of labor in domestic and breadwinning responsibilities is obliterated (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Co-parents must share financial and caregiving tasks and responsibilities equally, and their roles are gender-free.

The changing ideals of fatherhood have important implications for the types of activities that comprise father involvement, the empirical measurement of father involvement, and the instruments with which we measure involvement. Our first goal in this paper is to discuss briefly different tools and approaches to measuring father involvement, generally. Second, we talk about the specific measurement tools and methods used in the Father Studies of the Early Head Start (EHS) Evaluation Project. Third, we highlight lessons from the field that have emerged as father involvement is measured in the ongoing EHS project. We conclude by pointing out advances that have been made in the measurement of father involvement as well as the challenges yet to overcome.

Father involvement: What is it and how is it measured?

Investigators of father involvement have struggled with definitions of what it means to be an "involved father." Father involvement is a multidimensional, continually evolving concept -- both at the level of scholarship and at the level of cultural awareness. Although cultural ideals of fatherhood have evolved over time (Pleck, 1997), much of what we understand about parenting (and particularly what we think of as good parenting) stems from research and theory developed on mothers - the maternal template. In effect, we are struggling against generational, gender, class and ethnic biases.

These ideals of fatherhood are limited by the availability of data. For example, the social concern during the 1980s focused on whether children were getting enough fathering. That is, the emphasis was on the *amount* of fathering rather than the *kind and quality* of fathering. As mothers' participation in the labor force increased, the focus was also on whether fathers were doing enough child rearing to alleviate the burden of employed mothers. The availability of time use diaries from national representative samples and other large-scale probability samples made it possible to measure this involvement construct. Time use data includes respondents' estimation of the time they spent in child care and other activities.

A good example of a data set that collects time use data is the 1997 Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Hofferth, 1998). Since 1968 the PSID has collected data annually from a representative sample of about 5,000 American families. This study

provides reliable annual data on a rich set of measures of family income and assets, employment, and demographic histories of family members (Hofferth, Yeung, & Stafford, 1997). The supplement collected data from approximately 2,400 families that had at least one child between the ages of 0 and 12 at the time of the interview. Time diaries were collected for up to two children in the household for both a weekday and a weekend day and focused on the primary care giver, in most cases the mother, who knows the child best. The mother alone completed the majority (60%) of the diaries; the remaining diaries were completed by mothers and children together, or by children who filled out the diary. The few father reports come from fathers who were primary care givers.

While such time-use data had the advantage of being based on large probability samples of known generalization, they did not assess the quality of father child interactions making it difficult to link father involvement to child outcomes in a meaningful way. For example, although fathers who are better off financially have been found to spend *less* time with their children (Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili, 1988; Volling & Belsky, 1991), they have also been found to be more positively involved with their young children than fathers of lower socio-economic status (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984). Thus, trade-offs across amount, quality, and type of interactions or activities seem important, but how to best measure them as well as how they matter have not been resolved.

While assessing quantitative aspects of paternal involvement is already a demanding task, determining qualitative aspects of positive involvement is even more laborious and complicated. Various models of involvement have been conceptualized. Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine's (1985, 1987) model proposes three dimensions of father involvement: (1) *Engagement* (i.e., the extent to which fathers experience direct contact and shared interactions with their children in the context of caretaking, play, or leisure); (2) A*vailability* (i.e., a father's presence or accessibility to the child); and (3) *Responsibility* (e.g., the extent to which a father arranges for resources to be available to the child, including organizing and planning children's lives). However, it does not assess how children and fathers, in the context of families, develop a positive and nurturant relationship. Amato's (1987) summary measure of "paternal support" incorporates positive paternal activities along with reports of the father being a favorite person with whom the child talks and confides in about worries. Another approach is McBride's (1990; McBride's & Mills, 1993) Interaction/Accessibility Time Chart which discriminates four subcategories of engagement (defined as using play, functional, parallel, and transitional), accessibility, and responsibility.

Others have elaborated the involvement concept by including elements such as fathers' proportion of involvement in specific activities such as play (Radin, 1994). Radin's Paternal Index of Child Care Involvement (PICCI) assesses five components, labeled statement of involvement, child-care responsibility, socialization, responsibility, influence, child rearing decisions, and accessibility. Paternal involvement is reported in absolute terms for some components, and in proportional terms for others. The PICCI assesses both the overall time a father spends with his child as well as specific activities he engages in that are likely to promote child development. For example, the socialization subscale includes "helping children with personal problems" and "helping children to learn," and the child rearing decision subscale includes deciding "when children are old enough to learn new things." The summary score then reflects a composition of positive paternal involvement. Unfortunately, none of these models have been used in large-scale survey studies.

Similarly, Volling and Belsky's (1991) summary measure of "observed father-infant interaction" includes the frequency of responding, stimulating or arousing, caregiving, and expressing positive affection toward the child. This father measure is consistent with Belsky's (1984) conceptualization of "Growth-facilitating parenting" and "parenting that is sensitively attuned to children's capabilities and to the developmental tasks they face" (p. 85). Snarey (1993) assessed a father's engagement in his child's intellectual development, social development, and physical development during childhood and adolescence.

Another model of father involvement is that of Palkovitz's (1997), which builds on Lamb et al's tripartite conceptualization of father involvement. Palkovitz's (1997) framework conceptualizes paternal involvement to include three overlapping domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In addition to the domains of involvement, his model assesses simultaneously occurring continua (e.g., time invested, degree of involvement, observability, salience of involvement, directness, and proximity), and factors moderating involvement (e.g., individual/personality, interactional context/process, and meso-macro contexts). Within this conceptualization, Palkovitz lists 15 ways to be involved in parenting, including communicating, teaching, monitoring, engaging in thought processes, providing, showing affection, protecting, supporting emotionally, running errands, caregiving, engaging in child-related maintenance, sharing interests, being available, planning, and sharing activities.

The frequency of activities conceived to measure fathers' involvement has been measured in some large national representative studies. For example, in the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), fathers with preschool children only (ages 0-4) were asked about the frequency of three activities with their child or children: outings away from home (e.g., parks, zoos, museums), playing at home, and reading. Men with school-aged (5-18) children responded about the frequency of "leisure activities," working on projects or playing at home, having private talks, and helping with reading and doing homework (Marsiglio, 1991). This study can tell us how often fathers engage in these specific activities, but does not tell us about other activities that fathers might engage in with their children.

The PSID dataset has also been analyzed to examine father involvement using Lamb et al.'s model (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 1999). The PSID collects data on engagement and accessibility, and responsibility. Hofferth (1999) reports on the quality of the father-child interaction using father reports from the main Child Development Survey. The time diary data do not have this information.

How are these various taxonomies of and approaches to assessing father involvement related? Although different measures often share common constructs, they have not been integrated into a comprehensive model of father involvement. Pleck's (1997) review of the literature on relations between quantitative and qualitative dimensions of father involvement reveals that associations among PICCI subscales vary considerably in different samples; and associations between PICCI scales and quantitative and qualitative dimensions of involvement are mixed. Because there is no evidence linking involvement per se (i.e.,amount) with desirable child outcomes, Pleck (1997) argues that involvement needs to be combined with qualitative dimensions of paternal behavior through the concept of "positive paternal involvement." Positive paternal involvement is measured by assessing both quantitative and qualitative aspects of involvement. Positive involvement is thus distinct from paternal involvement per se,

and a large set of studies has provided empirical support for the hypothesis that positive paternal involvement benefits children (Amato's & Rivera, 1999).

In short, fathers' engagement with and accessibility to their children have been assessed using time use data gathered in national household surveys and specialized questionnaires (self-administered and interviewer-administered) (e.g., Radin's, 1994; Volling & Belsky's, 1991). Others have used observational measures to assess more qualitative dimensions of involvement; these data can yield very rich and fine-grained information on father involvement (e.g., Volling & Belsky's, 1991).

Limitations of existing measurements. Current approaches to the measurement of father involvement have frequently been characterized by three limitations: (1) the questionable validity of fathers' self-report, (2) the often interchangeable use of generic fathering vs child-specific fathering, and (3) the limited generalization of findings from middle-class, European American groups to other cultural groups.

One inherent problem in research that estimates the amount of time fathers spend with their children is that of validity (Pleck, 1997). Time use is often based on respondents' estimates rather than on full-scale time diaries because the latter, although more accurate, is so laborious. Research on the cognitive evaluation of survey questions suggests that the error variance in such estimates is considerable (Forsyth, Lesser, & Hubbard, 1992). One reason is that retrospective estimates require reconstructive thought processes, and subjects vary in the cognitive strategies they apply to such tasks. Moreover, even in questions do not require extensive reconstruction, whether or not fathers are valid reporters of their own involvement remains a question. Although there tends to be agreement between residential fathers' reports of their involvement and their partners' assessments, agreement varies in non-residential couples (McBride's & Mills, 1993).

A second problem inherent in large-scale surveys is that they do not always identify a target child and so evaluate generic fathering rather than child-specific fathering. Clearly, fathers differ in the behaviors and activities they eng age in with different children. Consequently, assessing the nonshared environment of siblings is crucial to understanding differences in fathering within households. The PSID collects child-specific data and so it is one of the few large-scale surveys that can be used to assess child-specific fathering.

Third, most of the existing research on father involvement has been based on small and select samples. What we know about fathers often derives from studies of middle-class men and from studies of mothers as proxies for fathers. Consequently, data on low-income fathers are limited. Oftentimes, economically disadvantaged fathers have had to endure the term "dead beat dad" as the focus has emphasized missing fathers, largely negative aspects of behavior, and negative outcomes in children. Research on diverse populations, on hard-to-reach fathers, and on potential strengths in less advantaged families is much needed and many noteworthy investigators are actively pursuing these aims.

Designing measures that both capture what fathers do and are sensitive to the variation in fathering across families, culture, and ethnicity is complicated. Thus, most current studies of father involvement include a variety of methodological approaches --structured and nonstructured interviews, videotaped observations, and the gathering of comparable data from mothers. By gathering both quantitative and qualitative information on father involvement, we can better evaluate the relative contributions of amount and quality of father-child interactions to child outcomes. As discussed in the

next section, the Father Studies of the Early Head Start National Evaluation exemplifies a research effort that is sensitive to the range of measures and approaches necessary to assessing the complex construct of father involvement.

Measuring Father Involvement in Early Head Start

EHS is a comprehensive, two-generation program that includes intensive services that begin before the child is born and concentrate on enhancing the child's development and supporting the family during the critical first three years of the child's life. There are currently more than 500 Early Head Start programs across the country, and more will be added in 1999 and beyond. Recognizing that the first years of life set the stage for most developmental learning, Early Head Start is a downward extension of Head Start that serves children and families from the child's birth or even prenatally.

A national evaluation of program implementation and impacts is being conducted in 17 research sites by a consortium of researchers and federal funding agencies working in partnership with the EHS programs. This study follows a random assignment design and includes a sample of nearly 3,000 children and their families, recruited when the children are 12 months of age or younger. In this evaluation study, children are assessed, primary care givers are interviewed, and parent-child interactions are videotaped when children are 14, 24, and 36 months of age. Primary care givers also complete a baseline enrollment interview, followed by parent service interviews at 6, 15, and 26 months after random assignment.

The 17 EHS programs participating in the national evaluation and local research represent a wide diversity of locations, populations, culture, ethnicity, and urban-rural settings. They are located in Russellville, Arkansas; Venice, California; Denver, Colorado (two programs); Marshalltown, Iowa; Kansas City, Kansas; Jackson, Michigan; New York City, New York; Kansas City, Missouri; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Sumter, South Carolina; McKenzie, Tennessee; Logan, Utah; Alexandria, Virginia; Kent, Washington; Sunnyside, Washington; and Brattleboro, Vermont.

The ongoing Early Head Start national evaluation and the local Early Head Start research studies are assessing how programs work with low-income families to enhance children's development and well-being, but data collection centers on mothers as the source of information. Although the national study obtains extensive data on fathers and father figures by interviewing mothers, an integrated set of studies that focus on fathers as the primary respondents has been added. These studies on fathers promise to increase our understanding of how fathers, as well as mothers, in the context of their families and the Early Head Start program, influence infant and toddler development. The Early Head Start father research will also enable us to learn more about how programs support fathers' relationships with their children and their children's mothers.

The EHS father group is gathering information about and from fathers at 1, 3, 6, and 14 months at some local sites, and 24 and 36 months across 14 sites. This information is the backbone of the father studies, which consist of 4 strands of father studies:

1. *Interviews with Fathers of 24- and 36-Month-Old Children*. This study of approximately 1,000 fathers in 14 of the sites is supported by the NICHD. The interview protocol parallels many of the questions asked of mothers in their 24- and 36-month interviews as well as a core set of qualitative questions that are going to generate new hypotheses about fathers and their involvement in children's lives and in early childhood programs. This study also collects data

on father-toddler interactions in seven sites, using videotaping procedures comparable to those used in assessing mother-toddler interactions at 24 and 36 months.

2. *The Study of Mothers and Fathers of Newborns*. The study of newborns, supported by the Ford Foundation, follows approximately 200 fathers and mothers of newborns. The fathers and mothers are interviewed when the children are 1, 3, 6, 14, 24, and 36 months of age. This study also includes interviews that contain qualitative questions and videotaped observations. The research with fathers of newborns will provide an in-depth look at the evolving nature of fatherhood and father involvement in children's lives from birth until age 3.

3. *The Practitioners Study*. The practitioners study is also funded by the Ford Foundation. It focuses on understanding the strategies Early Head Start programs use to engage fathers and father figures in the program; the "goodness of fit" between these strategies and fathers' perceived roles, needs, and preferences; the successes and barriers programs encounter in this process; how programs change over time; and how fathers and their relationships with their children and families are influenced by Early Head Start programs. This study uses both survey and qualitative methods to study father involvement in program activities.

4. *Local Research Studies*. The university researchers engaged in the Early Head Start fatherhood studies are conducting a variety of special studies focused on fatherhood issues of particular significance to their program partners and the populations served in their communities. Some of the local research includes interviews with fathers and videotaping of father-child interaction at follow-up periods between the national study data collection waves.

Measuring Father involvement in Early Head Start

Participants in the Early Head Start Father Studies include both biological and social fathers (i.e., including males in children's lives who may be important father-figures to them such as grandfathers and uncles). All the families are low-income and qualify for welfare benefits. Fathers in EHS are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which are predominantly African-American, Caucasian, and Latino.

Multiple indicators of father involvement are used, moving beyond a sole focus on economic provision. The indicators of father involvement, which are organized around Lamb et al.'s tripartite model, include assessments of father responsibility, types and frequencies of father-child interactions, and the emotional attachment between father and child. The content of a father's interaction with his child (e.g., caregiving versus teaching) as well as the *quality* of care that is provided are also considered. Moreover, fathers' *own views* about the relative importance of different dimensions of involvement, their expectations about their own involvement in their children's lives, and whether expectations about fatherhood influence their actual interactions with children are assessed. In addition, data are being collected from mothers about fathers.

Instruments

1. Questionnaires: The questionnaires for fathers used in these studies are administered by interviewers. They include open- and close-ended questions that ask about fathers' availability,

responsibility, and engagement, as well as general demographic information (age, education, employment, etc.). The questionnaires also include a set of qualitative questions that probe about fathers' own perspectives on the meaning of involvement. These questionnaires are administered when the children are 1, 3, 6, 14, 24, and 36 months of age.

2. Videotaped Father-Child Interactions. A rich feature of this collaborative investigation of father involvement is the repeated assessment of father-child interaction through videotaped observations, being obtained at EHS research sites. At 24 and 36 months of age, and starting even sooner (i.e., 6 months) for some children, fathers and their children are videotaped during four interaction segments: (1) *Teaching task* (3 min.): Fathers are asked to teach their child something new (i.e. put beads on a string); (2) *Your Choice* (5 min.): Fathers are asked to do any activity that they choose; (3) Free Play (10 min.): Fathers are presented with three separate bags of toys and asked to play with their child as they normally would; and (4) Clean up (3 min.): Fathers are asked to try and get their children to put the toys back in the bag and help them if they would like.

Quantitative data:

Data gathered from the close-ended questions will give us information on the three components of father involvement. Example of questions under each category include:

Availability/Accessibility: Since CHILD was born, how many months have you lived in the same household as him/her?

Responsibility: How often in the past month did you take CHILD to the doctor?

Engagement: In a typical day when you are with CHILD, do you give CHILD'S MOTHER a lot, some, or no help in caring for CHILD?

Qualitative Data:

The more open-ended questions assess fathers' views about fatherhood at 1, 6, 14, 24, and 36 months. These questions include:

What does being a good father mean to you?
How does being a father in CHILD' s life impact you?
Talk about your experiences with your father when you were a child.
What kind of help or support do you get to do your job as a father?
What kinds of help could you use?
What gets in your way of being the kind of father you' d like to be?

Measuring fathering involvement: Lessons from the field

Researchers participating in the EHS Fathers' studies have encountered numerous challenges in assessing father involvement in low-income men, including the developing of coding systems, obtaining reliability in the coding of father-child interactions, mothers' role as gatekeepers, operationalization of specific constructs, retention of participants, and the study of non-biological, social fathers.

A challenge to researchers involved in the videotaping of father-child interaction has been the development of a coding system for father behaviors. The kinds of definitions that have been adequate to guide reliable coding of mother-infant interactions may not be as clear or helpful when applied to father-infant interactions. One of the coding systems being used in New York City and Utah is based on likert-ratings of various dimensions of interactions in the father-child dyad, including affect, sensitivity, and involvement. Researchers at these sites did not want to blindly apply measures typically considered to be indices of maternal sensitivity to father-child interactions. Nor did they want to come away with coding systems that were so different from those used for mothers that comparability across partners would not be possible. As such, establishing reliability around father coding is ongoing, and a challenge. There exists a tension around coding unique but similar dimensions of interactions in father and mothers.

Establishing reliability around father coding is also a challenge. In Utah and NYC, for example, reliable coders of mothers' interactions have been found to assign virtually opposite codes of sensitivity, or flexibility to the same father (Tamis-LeMonda, Roggman, Bradley, & Summers, 1999). For example, fathers sometimes display "pretend gruffness." Coders who attend to a father's literal actions code such behaviors negatively, but those attending to the "feeling they get" code such behaviors as warm and loving. Another example is high directiveness in play, characterized by telling the toddler exactly what to do with the toys. Lori Roggman's team in found that this behavior often appears to be intrusive when done by mothers and is often found to interrupt the flow of play. However, coders felt that fathers engaging in the same behaviors appeared to be providing structure and that their directiveness seemed to elicit positive affect in toddlers. These examples highlight the issues raised in the assessment of qualitative dimensions of father involvement: Do we have the right template? One concern raised in the father involvement literature is that because there are little data on what fathers do, researchers tend to use a maternal template to assess father involvement rather than one developed from actual data on fathers. The data obtained from EHS will provide information that will be useful to the design of a paternal template.

A third challenge relates to the mothers' role as gatekeeper to her child. Mothers' gatekeeping role introduces a selection bias, which is difficult, if not impossible, to get around. While this role may be very beneficial to the child under certain circumstances, such as in cases of domestic violence and abuse, it may be harmful in others. Mothers, in essence, might turn away fathers who otherwise wish to be involved in their children's lives, and/or circumvent fathers' participation in the research study. It is difficult to ascertain a demographic profile of the men who cannot (or will not) participate in the study.

A fourth difficulty is the operationalization of certain dimensions of father involvement. As an example, a father's responsibility appears to be extremely difficult to measure (Lamb, 1985, Lamb, 1997). Responsibility in EHS has been conceptualized to include the planning and organizing of children's lives, as well as provision of resources. Although answers to questions about child support payments are relatively easy to obtain from nonresidential fathers, whether and how to measure financial provision in married households continues to be a topic of debate.

A fifth challenge concerns the retention of participants in the longitudinal study. Men in general, are typically difficult to find and are reluctant to respond to questionnaires. The study of low-income families exacerbates the problem of retention that is encountered in more accessible populations. For

example, reports from the field suggest that the majority of resources should be placed in making contact with the families and establishing rapport, rather than actual data collection.

A sixth area of concern is defining and assessing the involvement of "social fathers." A social fathers is a man who demonstrates parental characteristics that make him "like a father" to the child. He holds the expectations and obligations that society prescribes for fathers--whether he is biologically related (e.g., grandfather, uncle), associated with the child through marital ties (e.g., stepfather), or otherwise socially related to the mother (e.g., in cohabitation, as friend) (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). In EHS, mothers are asked to "Identify someone who is like a father to your child." Preliminary data suggest that this question has a different meaning for different respondents. In addition, devising an appropriate way of asking men themselves about whether they consider themselves like a father to the target child is important and should be included in future studies that look at the roles of social fathers in children's lives.

Through collaboration with other studies (e.g., The Fragile Family Studies, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study--Birth Cohort), it is clear that the EHS Father Studies Group is asking some important questions and gathering data that will prove to be extremely useful to the design of future studies in this area. For example, data are being collected on both biological and social fathers, and both quantitative and qualitative data on the father-child relationship are being gathered. Moreover, questions about the employment and child support contributions of nonresidential fathers, acknowledgment of paternity, paternal leave, and child support are also asked, though not always in a systematic way. However, even in the context of this rich data gathering effort, other important issues, such as custody and fertility (e.g., timing and intendedness), are not being addressed. Future studies of low-income fathers should collect these data in a direct, but sensitive way.

Conclusion

We know that fathers can and often do affect the development of their children in positive ways. Ongoing studies of father involvement are extending past research to diverse samples, and are using a variety of methodological approaches to assess multiple dimensions of father involvement. Notably, the Early Head Start Father study is one effort that is using a range of measures to capture how low-income men father. As such, conceptualizations of father are beginning to move beyond that of breadwinner. Measurement of father involvement in EHS improves on past methodologies in at least four ways: (1) it collects data from fathers themselves; (2) it uses a variety of methods (survey, open-ended questions, videotape) to assess both quantitative and qualitative aspects of involvement; (3) it samples low-income families from diverse family structures and ethnic backgrounds; and (4) it collects extensive data from mothers, children, programs, and communities.

These four strengths will enable EHS to make formidable contributions to both research and practice in the area of father involvement. The data collected will enable researchers to directly address the validity, reliability, and interrelations of various measures of father involvement. The practitioners study will contribute invaluable data on how programs engage low-income men. The rich observational data of father-child interactions will provide insight into the quality of father-child interaction and its implication for children's developmental outcomes through age three, and hopefully beyond. In addition, by collecting data from men themselves, rather than mothers as proxies for fathers, a richer appreciation for what it means to be a father, and an understanding of the language that men use to talk about themselves and their children, will be realized.

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